Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Graecos "How It Is That We Say There Are Three Persons In The Divinity But Do Not Say There Are Three Gods"* (To The Greeks: Concerning The Commonality Of Concepts)

DANIEL F. STRAMARA, JR.

INTRODUCTION

The question "What do we mean when we call God three Persons?" has been perennial ever since the fourth century. The meaning of 'person' is as problematic today as it was then. A trinitarian declaration of the faith was made by Constantinople I in 381, namely, "there is one Godhead, Power and Substance of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; the dignity being equal, and the majesty being equal in three perfect hypostases, i.e., three perfect persons (προσώποις)"[1] Gregory of Nyssa played a prominent role at this second Ecumenical Council,[2] and was subsequently commissioned by the Council Fathers and Emperor Theodosius to be the official

[1]*Epistula Constantinopolitani concilii ad papam Damasum et occidentales episcopos, Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta* (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1962), 28; *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Series 2 volume 14:189

[2]For a study of Constantinople I see Adolf Martin Ritter, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel und sein Symbol* (Göttingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965). Also see Demetrios J Constantelos, "Toward the Convocation of the Second Ecumenical Council," *GOTR* 27 (1982). 395-405; Deno J. Geanakoplos, "The Second Ecumenical Synod of Constantinople (381): Proceedings and Theology of the Holy Spirit," *GOTR* 27 (1982): 407-29; as well as chapter six of my dissertation "Unmasking the Meaning of *Πρόσωπον* Prosopon as Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa" (Ph D diss., Saint Louis University, 1996). For the role played by Gregory also see Werner Jaeger, "Gregor von Nyssa auf und nach dem Konzil von Konstantinopel (381)," in *Gregor von Nyssa's Lehre von Heiligen Geist* (Leiden: E J. Brill, 1966), 51-77

ambassador to promulgate the Church's doctrine.[3]

Previously Gregory had penned *Ad Ablabium* to explain how God is one essence and three hypostases.[4] Later he composed a treatise to address in particular the meaning of πρόσωπον, or person, when applied to God: *Ad Graecos (Ex communibus notionibus),* or *To the Greeks: Concerning the Commonality of Concepts.* Until now, no published English translation exists of this important fourteen page work, and only recently a German Version[5] was produced based on the critical text edited by Frederick Mueller in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. 3.1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), 19-33. This edition is the basis for the present translation. Following upon the view that the designation 'person' is as much a problem today as it was in the fourth century, it would seem important to make this text available to English speaking readers.

Gregory's work takes up the question as to what extent the Divine Persons are like human persons. His psychological approach is enlightening. Before discussing briefly the meaning of πρόσωπον in *Ad Graecos*, this important treatise needs to be contextualized historically.

Concerning the dating, Hübner contends that the primary focus of *Ad Graecos* was the distinction between οὐσία and ὑπόστασις. Thus he places it during or shortly after the Synod of Antioch in 379.[6] While his theory is plausible, it is open to critical questioning, even

[3]*Codex Theodosianus* 16 1 3 For an English translation see Clyde Pharr, *The Theodosian Code* (Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press, 1952), 440. Gregory mentions his conscription by the Emperor and the Council in *Epistula* 2 12-13, GNO 8 2 17,1-13 For a survey of this affair see the "Introduction" by Maraval in SC 363.32-38.

[4]See Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabum*, GNO 3 1 37-57 and the introduction and translation by Cyril Richardson in *The Library of Christian Classics Volume III Christology of the Later Fathers* (Philadelphia, PA Westminster Press, 1954), 235-67 as well as the article by G Christopher Stead, "Why not Three Gods? The Logic of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Doctrine," *in Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der christlichen Spatantike* (Leiden E J. Brill, 1990), 149-62

[5]See Hermann J Vogt, "Die Schrift *Ex communibus notionibus* des Gregor von Nyssa," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 171 (1991) 204-18

[6]See Reinhard M Hubner, "Gregor von Nyssa und Markell von Ankyra," in *Ecriture et culture philosophique dans la pensee de Grégoire de Nysse Actes du colloque de Chevetogne 22-26 Septembre 1969*, edited by Marguerite Harl (Leiden E J Brill, 1971), 206-209

though the Gregorian historical scholar, Stead, avows that Hübner's dating is "extremely probable."[7] The term ὑπόστασις first appears in the text at the bottom of the eighth page where it has a theological meaning but is used only cursorily. It does not figure into the discussion significantly until two pages later, near the end of the work. Here Gregory uses ὑπόστασις six times in a philosophical sense before applying it in a theological one. Hübner overlooks the fact that before the first occurrence of ὑπόστασις, the term πρόσωπον had already been discussed sixteen times with a human denotation and thirty-eight times in a trinitarian sense. Gregory utilizes ὑπόστασις in a theological sense only six times out of thirty-six instances,[8] compared to πρόσωπον which he employs sixty times in all, forty of which are in reference to Father, Son and Holy Spirit - the other twenty, to human persons.

Gregory's pressing question, as his title explicitly states, is: "How it is that we say there are three Persons (πρόσωπα) in the Divinity but do not say there are three Gods?" In other words, Gregory is saying, if I say that Peter, Paul and Barnabas are three πρόσωπα and call them three human beings, why is it that if I say the Father, Son and Spirit are three πρόσωπα I do not call them three gods? *Ad Graecos* is a treatise primarily explaining the term πρόσωπον, not the theological metaphysics of ὑπόστασις and οὐσία. The most probable occasion for such a focused exposition of πρόσωπον is the Second Ecumenical Council in which Gregory of Nazianzus highlighted the debate concerning the term πρόσωπον during the Council's sessions.[9] I proprose that this pamphlet was composed shortly after the Council's sessions when Gregory of Nyssa was commissioned as the official ambassador of the Council's theology.

[7] See G Christopher Stead, "Why not Three Gods? The Logic of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Doctrine," in *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der christlichen Spatantike* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 150. More cautiously, Gerhard May admits that it is tempting to place this work before 381, without actually pinning himself down to such a *terminus ad quem*, see May, "Die Chronologie des Lebens und der Werke des Gregors von Nyssa," in Harl, *Ecriture et culture,* 58-59.

[8] See Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Graecos*, GNO 3 1 26,18, 28,20, 29,8 & 10, 32,24 and 33,4.

[9] See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 42.16, SC 384:82-84 as well as chapter six of my dissertation.

I believe his opposition, referred to in the text as "they," are the Eunomians who were preoccupied with Aristotelian metaphysics. The Eunomians claimed that the hypostasis of the Son differed from that of the Father and thus they were prone to speak of "such and such" an hypostasis as opposed to an hypostasis of another quality (see below). After a linguistic and metaphysical analysis of several terms, Gregory concludes his treatise: "Therefore it is firmly established for us, rightly and logically, grounded in scientific reasons, that we profess one God, the Creator of the universe, even if God is contemplated in three Persons (πρόσωπα) or Hypostases, that of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."[10] Throughout this theological tract, πρόσωπον is manifestly the operative and predominant term; Gregory employs ὑπόστασις as a secondary synonym.[11]

Thus I propose that *Ad Graecos* was written shortly after July 381 as a pamphlet to be used by Gregory himself and others as they promulgated the Council's teachings to semi-arianized Christians, or more exactly to those who had been philosophically hellenized by an Aristotelian metaphysics; hence the subtitle— "To the Greeks: Concerning the Commonality of Concepts." I believe that this is a far more probable occasion for the writing of *Ad Graecos* than that proposed by Hübner. The lack of any reference to the Council in this treatise may be explained by the Eunomians' non-acceptance of the Council which had explicitly condemned them in its first canon. Gregory's argument would have to be linguistic and metaphysical, rather than ecclesiological and doctrinaire, if it were to convince such philosophically hellenized Christians.

But what does πρόσωπον mean for Gregory of Nyssa?[12] Lynch proposes "that Gregory seems to be limiting his theological applications of the word in *Ad Graecos* to rational, or spiritual, or self-conscious beings."[13] My own analysis corroborates Lynch's conclusion; the overwhelming majority of the time, Gregory employs

[10] Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Graecos*, GNO 3 1 33,1-5

[11] Such a preference for πρόσωπον over ὑπόστασις is borne out in the rest of Gregory's works

[12] John J Lynch broached this question in his article, "Prosopon in Gregory of Nyssa A Theological Word in Transition," *Theological Studies* 40 (1979) 728-38 The reader is once again directed to my dissertation in which I analyzed the three hundred and thirteen occurrences of the term in Gregory's authentic works

[13] Lynch, "Prosopon in Gregory of Nyssa," 738

the term to designate a relational and psychological being, whether divine or human. In this treatise he makes it clear that on several points the Divine Persons are not like human persons. The bishop of Nyssa clarifies,

> All the persons belonging to Man [i.e., Humanity] do not directly possess [i.e., derive] their being from the same person, but some from this one and some from that one, so that with respect to the individuals caused there are also many and diverse causes. But with regard to the Holy Trinity, such is not the case, for there is one and the same Person, that of the Father, from whom the Son is begotten and the Holy Spirit proceeds.... For the Persons of the Divinity are not separated from one another either by time or place, not by will or by practice, not by activity or by passion, not by anything of this sort, such as is observed with regard to human beings.

While for Gregory the Divine Persons are fundamentally relational beings possessing will, purpose and consciousness, they are not limited as are human persons.[14] Although the bishop of Nyssa is comfortable in presenting the Father, the Only-Begotten and the Holy Spirit in ontological terms as does Eunomius, he prefers to depict them in relational and psychological categories so as to express their inner vitality and relationality, which then overflows to creation. Eunomius denied the dynamic and personal relationality intrinsic to the Divine Persons, something Gregory of Nyssa safeguarded by his insistance upon the term πρόσωπον. For Gregory, πρόσωπον is not only a valid theological term, but a rich designation which preserves God's relationality. Each prosopon is *pros*, i.e., *facing towards* the other.

* * * * *

In my translation, the following terms have been consistently rendered in the same manner so that the reader may know what the underlying Greek words are. Πρόσωπον is rendered as 'person,' capitalized when referring to a member of the Holy Trinity so as to distinguish it from a human person. The term οὐσία is always trans-

[14]For Gregory's presentation of the Divine Persons in psychological terms see chapter four of my dissertation.

lated as 'essence.' The word ὑπόστασις is most often 'subsistence,' a concrete individual manifestation of an abstract essence; sometimes however, given the Trinitarian context, it is simply transliterated as 'hypostasis;' the word ὕπαρξις is 'substance' and εἶδος is 'species' since it is connected with γένος which is 'genus.' Ἄτομον is 'individual' and μερικὴ is translated as 'individuated' in the sense of a particularized portion. The following verbs with their nouns have been translated accordingly: διαφέρω = 'differ(entiate),' διακρίνω = 'distinguish/distinction,' and διαιρέω = 'divide, separate.'

Of especial difficulty is the term ἄνθρωπος. Gregory uses it to refer to humanity as a whole, reminiscent of the Neo-Platonic idea or form; hence he argues against it being pluralized, since there is only *one* humanity. In certain contexts, however, it means a particular human being. It appears that Gregory uses ἄνθρωπος in an inclusive sense since elsewhere he sometimes applies it to women.[15] Furthermore, Gregory believes that gender specification is something added to the original image of ἄνθρωπος.[16] Thus ἄνθρωπος is translated as 'Man,' capitalized to refer to humanity as a general concept, even when it might mean a particular human being. The incorrectness and awkwardness that Gregory perceived in the plural ἄνθρωποι, is rendered by the admittedly incorrect and awkward 'Mans.'

My use of this term however, is demanded by the argument of the text. Because Gregory extensively analyzed the term ἄνθρωπος, using it fifty-one times, I considered it best to render it always by the same word: Man, and in the plural, Mans. The sound of "mans" jars the reader, and conveys the inappropriateness Gregory himself experienced in the term ἄνθρωποι. Consistently using Man and Mans will also allow the reader to feel the force of Gregory's argumentation throughout and to follow his logic more easily. In short, there is only one Humanity, not many humanities; there is only one Deity, not many deities. Just as a plurality of Divine Persons, namely three, does not mean there are many deities or gods.

The three cases in which males (ἄνδρες) are referred to, the noun is translated as 'men.'

[15]See, for example, Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum* 2, GNO 6 69,4-14 addressed to the deaconess Olympia, and *Contra Eunomium* 2, GNO 1 278,7-9

[16]See Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 16, PG 44 177D-185D and Verna E F. Harrison, "*Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 41 (1990). 441-71, as well as chapter 3 3 of my dissertation

The numbers in brackets refer to the pages of the critical text established by Mueller in GNO 3.1. Finally, I am indebted to Anthony C. Daly, S.J., associate professor of classical languages at Saint Louis University, who reviewed my translation and provided help with some difficult passages.

The importance of πρόσωπον as a theological term is testified to in this significant treatise. Gregory of Nyssa was proclaimed the "Father of the Fathers" by the Seventh Ecumenical Council. His thoughts on the subject warrant close attention.

* * * * *

HOW IT IS THAT WE SAY THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN THE DIVINITY BUT DO NOT SAY THERE ARE THREE GODS (TO THE GREEKS: CONCERNING THE COMMONALITY OF CONCEPTS)

Gregory of Nyssa

[19] If the term "God" were indicative of the Person, then out of necessity when we speak of the three Persons we would be saying three Gods, but if the term "God" signifies the essence, when we confess the one essence of the Holy Trinity we rightly teach as doctrine that there is one God since the term "God" refers to one essence. Therefore it follows that God is one both according to essence and terminology, not three. Neither do we assert God and God and God (just as we say Father and Son and Holy Spirit, when we combine the terms signifying the Persons by the conjunction "and"), because the Persons are not the same but different–they differ from one another according to the very significance of their names. To the term "God" which signifies the essence, because of a certain characteristic property pertaining to the essence, we do not add the conjunction "and" so as to say God and God and God. This indeed is the essence of which the Persons are constituted, and which the term "God" signifies. Wherefore, God is one and the same; the conjunction "and" is never employed between a thing and itself.

[20] Whether we say Father-God and Son-God and Holy Spirit-God or God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit we

combine them with the conjunction "and" according to the meaning of the terms of the Persons, such as Father, Son, Holy Spirit, so that there might be a Father and a Son and a Holy Spirit, that is to say a Person and a Person and a Person; wherefore, there are indeed three Persons. The term "God" is absolutely and in like manner predicated of each one of the Persons without the conjunction "and," so that we cannot say God and God and God, but conceive of the second and third term as being said with regard to the subsisting Persons, propounding the second and third time without the conjunction "and" on account of there not being another and another God.

For it is not because the Father preserves his otherness with regard to the Son that the Father is God, for thus the Son would not be God. For if because the Father is Father, for this reason the Father is God, it would follow that since the Son is not the Father, then the Son would not be God. If the Son is God, he is not God in that he is Son. Similarly, the Father too is not God in that he is Father. They are God because of their Divine Essence, the essence of the Father and the Son. Through the Divine Essence the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God.

And there is no division of the essence into each of the Persons so that there are three essences for the respective Persons. It is evident that the term "God" is not to be divided, since it signifies the essence; such a division would result in three gods. But just as the Father is essence, and the Son is essence, and the Holy Spirit is essence–yet there are not three essences–so too, the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God; yet there are not three gods. For God is one and the same, since there is one and the same essence, [21] even if it is said that each of the Persons is essential and is God. For either it is necessary to say that there are three essences, that of the Father, that of the Son, and that of the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as the essence is proper to each of the Persons–something which is utterly unreasonable to maintain seeing that we do not call Peter, Paul and Barnabas three essences (for the essence is one and the same for such persons); or, we must state that the essence is one to which belong the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, although we know each of the Persons as essential, rightly and reasonably declaring that God is One, even though we believe each of the Persons to be God by reason of the communion of essence. Thus, inasmuch as the Father is different from the Son and from the Holy Spirit, we profess the three Persons

of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, because the Father does not differ from the Son and the Holy Spirit according to essence, we say that there is one essence of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

For since there is a distinction, there is a Trinity according to distinction, and since there is an identity, there is a Unity on account of the identity. Therefore, there is an identity of the Persons according to essence, and a Unity proper to Them on account of the essence. If according to essence there is a Unity of the Holy Trinity, it is clear that there is also a Unity according to the term "God." For this term designates the essence but not by furnishing its quiddity (since indeed the Divine Essence is incomprehensible, even unascertainable). Taken from a certain specific property belonging [22] to the essence, the term "God" intimates the essence, just as neighing and laughing are said to be specific properties of natures and indicate those natures of which they are the specific properties. Indeed there is a specific property of the eternal essence to which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit belong, that is to oversee all things, to perceive all things and to know all things, not only those things which actually exist, but also those things conceived by the mind. This property is proper to that essence alone. Indeed, that essence is the Cause underlying the entire universe and has created everything and governs everything as its own creation; it holds sway over human affairs by a certain appropriate and inexpressible word.

Consequently, the term "God," properly signifies that essence which truly governs the universe as the creator of everything. So then, while there is one essence to which belong Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and while the one term indicates this essence (namely, "God"), God will rightly be one according to the rationale of this essence, and there is no reason forcing us to say "three gods," just as there are not three essences. For since in the case of Peter, Paul and Barnabas we do not declare there to be three essences since they are of one essence, how much more so in the case of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will we not declare this properly? For if the essence is not to be divided into three according to the persons, it is obvious that neither should God be, because the term "God" does not indicate Person, but rather the essence. For if the term "God" designated a Person, then only one [23] of the Persons would be called God–Person would be signified by this name God–just as the Father alone is called Father because

this name designates his Person.

But if someone were to say that we call Peter, Paul and Barnabas three individuated essences (it is clear that this means each his own), for this is quite accurate to say, let it be known that by an individuated essence (that is one's own) we wish to signify nothing other than an individual, in other words, a person. Wherefore, indeed, even if we say three individuated essences, that is, individual essences, we declare nothing other than three persons; whereas the term "God" does not follow suit upon the Persons, as has been shown. Neither does the term follow suit upon the individuated essence (in other words, individual essence), for the individual essence is the same thing as the person when used with respect to indivisible things. What then must be said regarding this, that we call Peter, Paul and Barnabas three Mans?[17] Even though these are persons, the term "persons" does not signify the common essence in this usage; likewise, neither does the so-called individuated or individual essence, since this is the same thing as the person. For what reason do we say three "mans" exist of one essence–the term "Man" designates it–if we do not say it on account of the three persons nor because we speak of an individuated, or individual essence? Rather, we say this by a misuse of language and not correctly, on account of a certain customary usage arising out of necessary principles,[18] which, however, we do not find in our analysis of the Holy Trinity so that we do not make the very same assertion with respect to the Trinity itself.

[24] These are the principles: the definition of Man is not always observed in the same individuals or persons, for while the former ones are dying others are coming into existence, and again while many of them still remain, yet others are being born, so that the defining measure of this nature, that is to say Man, is observed sometimes in these individuals here, sometimes in those there, sometimes in the very many and sometimes in the very few. Therefore, for this reason, that is the addition and subtraction, the death and birth of individuals, in whom the defining measure of Man is perceived, we are constrained to say "many mans" and "few mans" because of the change and alteration of the persons, the common usage being dis-

[17] See discussion in the introductory section regarding the specialized use of this term by the translator

[18] The same argument is present in *Ad Ablabium* (On Not Three Gods)

placed along with the definition of essence, so that somehow we number essences along with the persons.

No such thing ever results in the case of the Holy Trinity, for it is necessary to say that the self-same Persons exist and not another and another, always being the same and in just the same manner. We do not admit a certain addition resulting in a quaternity, nor a diminution into a duality. For neither is another Person begotten or brought forth from the Father or from one of the other Persons so that a quaternity arises from a former trinity; nor does one of these three Persons pass away even for the blink of an eye as it were, so that the trinity becomes a duality even in rational analysis. For there is absolutely no addition or diminution, change or alteration pertaining to the three Persons of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit so that our conception of the three Persons should be led astray and we be forced to admit "three gods."

Or again, all the persons belonging to Man [25] do not directly possess their being from the same person, but some from this one and some from that one, so that with respect to the individuals caused there are also many and diverse causes. But with regard to the Holy Trinity, such is not the case, for there is one and the same Person, that of the Father, from whom the Son is begotten and the Holy Spirit proceeds. Wherefore indeed, rightly so and boldly do we proclaim one God, one Cause together with its Caused Realities,[19] since it coexists with Them. For the Persons of the Divinity are not separated from one another either by time or place, not by will or by practice, not by activity or by passion, not by anything of this sort, such as is observed with regard to human beings. This alone is observed, that the Father is Father and not Son, and the Son is Son and not Father; and, likewise, the Holy Spirit is neither Father nor Son. For this very reason there is absolutely no necessity for anyone to trick us into calling the three Persons: "three gods;" just as we call many human beings "many persons" according to the aforesaid reasons.

Because according to the aforesaid reasons and not according to strict logic do we call the many persons of Man many mans; hence it is clearly obvious that Man, in and of itself, is one and cannot become many. As everyone agrees, Peter, Paul and Barnabas are called one Man as far as humanity is concerned. Consequently, in itself,

[19] τόν ἕνα αἴτιον μετά τῶν αὐτοῦ αἰτιατῶν.

that is to say insofar as Man is concerned, there cannot be many of them. To say many "mans" is a misuse of language and is not said in a proper sense. It is neither right nor possible that the common misusage should destroy the proper meaning and usage [26] for those who have a good understanding about this. Therefore, one must not end up saying with regard to the three Persons of the Divine Essence: "three gods," on account of the identity of the essence which is signified by the term "God" in the way described above.

And should someone say that the Scripture enumerates "three men," which it does, speaking in a superfluous manner–if someone tries to convict us from our own words, such a fellow does not seem to be a correct and devout hearer of the Scripture.[20] He is not directing texts against us about whether one ought to say "three gods," attending especially to the three Persons of the Divine Essence, because the Scripture which commends to us the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, namely God-the-Word, God-not-the-Word (that is to say, God the Father), and God the Holy Spirit, this Scripture altogether refuses to say "three gods," considering polytheism to be impious. Rather it always proclaims one God, neither confusing the Persons nor dividing the Divinity, guarding rather the identity of the Divinity in the specific character of three Hypostases or Persons. Well then, if he were correct and were providing a valid interpretation, understanding these matters according to the Scripture and not eagerly trying to confirm his own ideas, he would make inquiry seeking to learn the reason why the Scripture says "three men" while recognizing the one wholeness of Man. It says, "Man, like [27] grass are his days,"[21] thereby proclaiming the singular commonality of the nature. For speaking of what pertains to the commonality of the nature it said this of one Man because it knew the one Man to be the entire Man and not many mans.

For listen and inquire as one who loves learning that the Scripture also, like a good mother, knowing her own little babies, that is, us humans, at times makes gurgling and cooing sounds.[22] In just the same way, the Scripture accommodates herself using certain terms

[20] See Genesis 18 2

[21] Psalm 102 15.

[22] In *Contra Eunomium* 2 (CE 13), GNO 1 348,10-29, Gregory presents God as mother with these same characteristics

while not doing violence to the full expression, that is to say, she does not act unjustly to those who are able to partake of solid food. For not defining the "cooings" as dogmas, she does not harm the full expressions, but through compassion condescending to the level of the babies and imitating their speech, she brings them up to her level, leading them to the fullness of adulthood. Yet, nevertheless, the Scripture defines and teaches as doctrine the full expressions according to what is befitting to herself so that those being trained may be properly taught. Although it speaks of God having ears, eyes, a mouth, and other bodily parts, Scripture does not hand down as dogma that the Divinity is composed of various parts. But as we said before, making a metaphor from human realities to serve the need, as I said, of those unable to conceive incorporeal things by certain material and clear expressions, Scripture puts forward its teachings, saying that God is a spirit and everywhere, so that setting out from there it wisely teaches people to arrive at God's simple uncircumscribability.

[28] In this way, does Scripture say "three men" according to customary usage so that it might not do violence to the common usage and the prevailing practice of the many; and it says "one" according to accuracy so as not to shake to its foundation the full expression and the reality seen in the nature of things. On the one hand we think it exercises condescension for the profit and advantage of those who are childlike in their thinking, yet on the other hand we state that doctrine has been put forward for the confirmation and transmission of the full understanding.

But certain people devoted to searching and eager to allow nothing to go unchallenged in order to harass with much work both the speakers and the listeners, as I would put it, neglect what has been said by us, and take what has not been handed down as a matter of common agreement and misuse it. They manufacture a likely story and say that just as we say a subsistence does not differ from a subsistence, *qua* subsistence, that is to say, insofar as it is a subsistence, and do not say according to this that all subsistences are one subsistence; or again, as we say an essence does not differ from an essence, *qua* essence, and do not say according to this that all essences are one essence; so too, we would say God does not differ from God, *qua* God, and do not say according to this that the three hypostases, concerning which the term God is predicated, are one God. Or again, when we say Man does not differ from Man, *qua* Man, we do not

abrogate the existence of three human beings, namely Peter, Paul and Barnabas. For an essence differs from an essence, not insofar as it is essence, but as "such and such" an essence, and a subsistence from a subsistence as "such and such" a subsistence. [29] In the same manner a Man differs from a Man, insofar as he is "such and such" a Man, or again a God differs from a God, insofar as he is "such and such" a God, for the term "such and such or such and such" is usually used with regard to two or more. But they are saying these things as we said. We will demonstrate that what they said is altogether captious and nothing else. We will prevail simply by using what has been said, showing that it is not necessary to say "such and such" a God and "such and such" a God or "such and such" a Man and "such and such" a Man. Indeed, there is "such and such" an hypostasis of God and "such and such" an hypostasis of Man, for many are the hypostases of the one Man and we rightly say three hypostases of the one God.

Therefore, "such and such" is said when someone wishes to distinguish a particular from the general proper to that designation, to which "such and such" is compared. Thus we say that a Man is "such and such" an animal, having in mind to distinguish him from a horse, for example—a horse which has in common with him the name of animal, but which is differentiated from him with regard to rationality and irrationality. Something is distinguished from something else either by essence or by subsistence or by both essence and subsistence, and thus Man is distinguished from horse by essence, whereas Paul is distinguished from Peter by subsistence, and in addition the specific human subsistence is distinguished by both essence and subsistence from the specific subsistence of the horse. But since the case is clear when things differ simply by essence and when things differ according to subsistence and not according to essence, the further case will also be clear concerning things which are distinguished both according to essence and subsistence.

So let us thoroughly examine the argument concerning these things. Both they and we agree that things differing according to essence are said to be two or three essences, and things differing according to subsistence are said to be two or three subsistences. [30] But herein do we depart company when they say it is necessary to call Peter and Paul two Mans, but, we say this is not accurate speaking properly and according to a scientific account. We are not going to say any-

thing now about common parlance resulting from a misuse of language. Such a manner of speaking is able neither to refute something nor to substantiate

First of all, let it be made perfectly clear by us why we declare a Man and a horse, or a horse and a dog, to be different thanks to "such and such" an essence. Hence it is obvious that since they are differentiated from one another, it is according to the customary characterization of essence: rational or irrational, able to neigh, able to bark, and whatsoever other quality. For in saying this sort of essence we mean nothing else than, for example, a substance participating in life in contradistinction to one which is not, a substance having become capable of reason as distinct from one which is differing because of an irrational nature, a substance possessing the characteristic of being able to neigh and any other such quality whatsoever. Instead of such differences and characteristics something else is attached to the essence and also to every genus by which there is a distinction among the species under the genus. There is the designation "of this sort" or "of that sort." That is to say, the designation "an essence of this sort" is used in the place of saying perceptible or imperceptible, or the designation "an animal of that sort" is used in the place of the designation rational or irrational.

We say again that Paul differs from Peter according to the specific sort of subsistence of each one of them, since they differ from one another according to some of the things which constitute the subsistence and not the essence, i.e., baldness, height, fatherhood, sonship or anything else of this sort. [31] For it is clear that the species and the individual are not the same thing, that is the essence and subsistence. For if anyone speaks about the individual, i.e. the subsistence, he immediately directs the mind of the listener to look for someone curlyhaired, grey-eyed, a son, a father, et cetera. Whereas the term "species" (that is to say essence) directs the listener to an understanding, namely: a rational animal, mortal, capable of understanding and knowledge; an irrational animal, mortal, capable of neighing and the like. But since essence and individual (that is to say subsistence) are not the same thing, neither are the things which characterize the essence and the subsistence the same. And since these are not the same thing, neither is it possible to join them to the same terms, but the former are to be joined with words subsumed under essence or essences, and the latter to words referring to the individual.

Well then, there are three terms with regard to our investigation: essence, individual and Man. We connect the term "such" to essence in order to distinguish, as was said, the species from one another according to the essence itself. And again, likewise, we adjoin the term "such" to subsistence in order to differentiate the persons from one another, even though they have this name in common, that of subsistence, and thus differ from one another not in characteristics proper to essence, but rather according to so-called accidents.

Therefore, in what way do they intend to add the word "such" to the term "Man?" (For from what is commonly agreed to, disputed matters receive resolution.) Is "such" added to the essence? Therefore will individuals under the category of Man be distinguished from one another by a difference of essence? That is impossible, for in no wise does Paul differ from Peter according to essence, according to that which is predicated of Man. But as regards the subsistence? Therefore, "Man" would be indicative of the person [32] and not of the essence, something utterly preposterous to say, for Man signifies the general aspect of the essence and not the specific person, that of Paul, say, or of Barnabas. Therefore in no way is the word "such" added to the term "Man" according to the scientific meaning of the term. But if the common parlance stammers in the face of this and makes an unrestrained use of the terms pertaining to essence to designate the individual person, it does not employ the terms according to the accurate standard of logical science. But why do I inveigh against the customary misuse of language which is at a loss regarding things like this, forgetting that those trained in the scientific study of words propound in distinct and suitable terms what they understand? Often not communicating well with others the experts themselves employ the misuse of language in order to restate in other words what they have said.

But let us be clear about this that if we said concerning Peter and Paul that Man differs not at all from Man *qua* Man, except because it is this sort of Man, we were unable to say concerning them that essence also differs not at all from essence *qua* essence, except because it is this sort of essence. But since it is impossible to say this because one and the same essence belongs to Peter and Paul, therefore neither is the other possible, because the term "Man" is indicative of the essence. And since the term "such and such" is not logically added to the term "Man," therefore, neither do we correctly say two or three

Mans.

Consequently, if these matters concerning the term "Man" are admitted, how much more so will it be most right and befitting with regard to the eternal and Divine Essence not to say "such and such" a God meaning each of the hypostases, nor when referring to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit to utter God and God and God, nor, even if by rational analysis, to profess three gods. [33] Therefore it is firmly established for us, rightly and logically, grounded in scientific reasons, that we profess one God, the Creator of the universe, even if God is contemplated in three Persons or Hypostases, that of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

ATLAS erials

Copyright and Use:

As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.

No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.